



Amendments to the Claims

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application.

1-47. (Cancelled)

48. (Previously Presented) A system comprising:

units of a commodity that can be used by respective users in different locations,
a user interface, which is part of each of the units of the commodity, configured to provide a medium for two-way local interaction between one of the users and the corresponding unit of the commodity, and further configured to elicit, from a user, information about the user's perception of the commodity,

a memory within each of the units of the commodity capable of storing results of the two-way local interaction, the results including elicited information about user perception of the commodity,

a communication element associated with each of the units of the commodity capable of carrying results of the two-way local interaction from each of the units of the commodity to a central location, and

a component capable of managing the interactions of the users in different locations and collecting the results of the interactions at the central location.

49. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the user interface is triggered based on user behaviors to generate two-way interactions with each of the users, each of the interactions relating to a corresponding specific one of the behaviors.

50. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the interactions are triggered to occur repetitively for each of the users based on repeated uses of a feature of a unit of the commodity by the user.

51. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the user interface comprises part of a functional user interface of the unit of the commodity that can be used to control features of the commodity.

52. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the communication element also carries information from a passive probe that monitors the user's use of the commodity.

53. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the units of the commodity comprise telephone extension equipment and the central location comprises a private branch exchange or other central telephone network facility.

54. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the results of the interactions are forwarded from the central location to a remote server for analysis.

55. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the units of the commodity comprise facsimile equipment and the user interface triggers the two-way interaction to occur on-line between the unit of the facsimile equipment and a vendor of the facsimile equipment.

56. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 55 in which the on-line interaction occurs by voice spoken through the facsimile machine's handset, transmitted by telephone line to a computer of the vendor, and stored at the vendor's computer.

57. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the units of the commodity comprise consumer television equipment.

58. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the two-way interaction provides instructions on how to use the commodity.

59. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 57 in which the two-way interaction comprises posing questions to a user on a television screen concerning use of the commodity and receiving answers from the user expressed through a keypad or a handheld remote.

60. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 59 in which the answers are forwarded to a vendor of the commodity.

61. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the two-way interaction is mediated by a publicly or privately accessible on-line computerized information service.

62. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the user interface presents information in one or more of the following styles: text, lists, charts, views, arrangements, hierarchies, graphical maps, sample extracts, abstracts, summary descriptions, or hypertext.

63. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 62 in which the user interface triggers two-way interactions that comprise training based on two-way interactions with all or some other users, the interactions being arranged to present actions that the user could take to increase performance or satisfaction to a level achieved by other users.

64. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the user interface can be triggered based on user comprehension or performance with respect to the user's use of the commodity.

65. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the user interface can be triggered by premature termination of use of the commodity.

66. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the user interface can be triggered by an exception resulting from use of the commodity.

67. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the elicited information is information about the user's needs with respect to use of the commodity.

68. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the elicited information is information about the user's perception of competing commodities.

69. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the two-way local interactions comprise a transaction for sale of a product or a service contract for the commodity.

70. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the two-way local interactions comprise a request for servicing of the commodity by the user.

71. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the user interface includes a sound recorder.

72. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the units of commodity are configured to store voice or sound information.

73. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the units of commodity are configured to digitize voice or sound information.

74. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the two-way interaction comprises voice communication.

75. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the user interface includes a console displaying text or graphics.

76. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 75 wherein the console comprises a display of a computer, phone, or handheld device.

77. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the component is configured to provide access to the collection of results to vendors of the commodity.

78. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the component is configured to provide access to the collection of results to the users of the commodity.

79. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the component is configured to provide access to the collection of results to third parties.

80. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 59 in which the keypad or hand-held remote comprises numeric keys.

81. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 62 in which the style is hypertext.

82. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the units of commodity store one or more probes that elicit specific information from the respective users through the user interfaces.

83. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 82 in which the component that manages the interactions of the users sends the probes to each of the units of the commodity.

84. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the information about the commodity comprises value information.

85. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 84 in which the value information comprises usage logs.

86. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 84 in which the value information comprises information about user comprehension.

87. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 84 in which the value information comprises information about user performance.

88. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 84 in which the value information guides a user's interaction with the commodity.

89. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 84 in which the value information comprises marketing information or information about future product design.

90. (Previously Presented) A system comprising:
units of a facsimile equipment that can be used by respective users in different locations,
a user interface which is part of each of the units and is configured to trigger a two-way interaction to occur on-line between the unit of the facsimile equipment and a vendor of the facsimile equipment, the user interface being configured to generate information about use of the unit by the user,
a communication element associated with each of the units capable of carrying results of the two-way local interaction from each of the units to a central location, and
a component capable of managing the interactions of the users in different locations and collecting the results of the interactions at the central location.

91-92. (Cancelled)

93. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 90 in which the user interface can be electronically triggered based on user behaviors to generate two-way interactions with each of the users, each of the interactions relating to a corresponding specific one of the behaviors.

94. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 90 wherein the component is configured to provide access to the collection of results to the users of the commodity.

95. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 90 wherein the component is configured to provide access to the collection of results to vendors of the commodity.

96. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 90 wherein the component is configured to provide access to the collection of results to third parties.

97. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 90 in which the on-line interaction occurs by voice spoken through the facsimile machine's handset, transmitted by telephone line to a computer of the vendor, and stored at the vendor's computer.

98. (Previously Presented) A system comprising:
units of a commodity that can be used by respective users in different locations,
a user interface which is part of each of the units of the commodity and is configured to provide a medium for two-way local interaction between one of the users and the corresponding unit of the commodity for generating information about use of the unit of the commodity by the user, the user interface being configured to elicit information about (i) steps that a vendor of the commodity could take to improve the user's satisfaction or (ii) training or support provided for users of the commodity;

a communication element associated with each of the units of the commodity capable of carrying results of the two-way local interaction from each of the units of the commodity to a central location, and

a component capable of managing the interactions of the users in different locations and collection of the results of the interactions at the central location and provides access to the collection of results to a third party.

99. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the results of the interactions are forwarded from the central location to the third party.

100. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the results of the interactions are forwarded from the central location to a remote server for analysis.

101. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the third party is a vendor of the commodity.

102. (Cancelled)

103. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the third party is a designer of the commodity.

104. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 wherein the user interface presents user information in a style that comprises hypertext.

105. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the user interface can be electronically triggered based on user behaviors to generate two-way interactions with each of the users, each of the interactions relating to a corresponding specific one of the behaviors.

106. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the interactions are triggered based on repeated use of a feature of a unit of the commodity by the user.

107. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 98 in which the component is further configured to provide access to the collection of results to the users of the commodity.

108-121. (Cancelled)

122. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the two way local interaction enables the user to request help or support.

123. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 in which the information relates to perception of a problem relating to use of the commodity.

124. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 123 in which the two-way local interaction includes suggestions of the user to solve the problem.

125. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 123 in which the two-way local interaction includes suggestions of another user to solve the problem.

126. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the commodity is a demonstration unit.

127. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the communication element also carries objective information about the user's use of the commodity.

128. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the two-way local interactions occur while the user is using the commodity.

129. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 48 wherein the component further manages collection of the results of the interactions along with information about a trigger event that initiated each respective interaction.

130. (Cancelled)

131. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 78 wherein the component distributes results of the interactions to the users as a function of when the interactions occurred.

132. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 78 wherein the component further manages collection of information for each interaction about usefulness of the interaction to other users.

133. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 78 wherein the component is further configured to allow each user to filter information in the collection of the results according to a user's own needs, or desires.

134. (Cancelled)

135. (Currently Amended) A method for gathering information from units of a commodity in different locations, each unit of the commodity being coupled to a remote database on a network, the method comprising:

eliciting ~~user~~ ~~from users for their~~ perceptions of respective units of ~~the~~[[a]] commodity through interactions at a user-interface[[s]] of the respective unit ~~units of a commodity~~;

generating perception information based on inputs of the users at the respective user-interfaces;

transmitting the perception information to the remote database;

receiving the transmitted perception information from different units of the commodity; and

collecting and storing the received information at the remote database.

136. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 135 further comprising enabling users of the commodities to access the received information.

137. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 135 further comprising enabling third parties to access the received information.

138. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 137 in which the third parties include vendors or designers of the commodities.

139. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 135 further comprising making a design change using the received information, or marketing the commodity using the received information.

140. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 135 wherein said eliciting step includes interacting with the users through the respective user-interfaces of units of commodity to elicit perception information about (i) steps that a vendor of the commodity could take to improve user satisfaction or (ii) training or support provided for users of the commodity.